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Smooth **Operator**

Ambient noise and the occasional mood-setting music in the original Portal may not have left much of an impression (there was music?!), but we assume that, like the rest of us, Jonathan Coulton's "Still Alive" was stuck in your head for weeks after completion. Valve is aware of the fan connection to Portal's now iconic anthem, and plans to integrate music into Portal 2 in more deliberate and surprising ways.

"The music was something that so many people identified with in the first game – it was the last thing they saw," Johnson recalls. "So yes, Coulton is going to be involved. When we sat down to work on Portal 2 it was clear that music had to be a bigger part of the game. There is going to be ways in Portal 2 that you can find and discover new songs. It's not going to be a musical, but it's not going to be a simple case of having a new song at the end of the game."

Though Coulton is already collaborating with the team to infuse his flair into the project, they remain quiet about the exact applications of his music, primarily because they don't want to ruin the surprise.

"It was kind of surprising that there was a song at the end of Portal," Johnson elaborates. "And while we're 99 percent sure that we'll end with a song again, we can't recapture that moment. So we spent quite a bit of time thinking about where and how we could use music throughout Portal 2 to surprise people."

We happened across one such bolt from the blue in our demo session, although not one that utilised Coulton's skills. Feeling particularly punishing, GLaDOS attempted to use smooth jazz as a weapon to keep us in line. It worked.

From **Trial** To **Triple-A**

With its augmented length, fresh puzzle elements, polished presentation and new cooperative campaign, Portal 2 hardly needs to be tucked into a value package. From what we've seen of the sequel, this is a fully featured game that will be right at home amongst other high-profile titles at retail. Due out this spring, you won't have to wait too long to spend more time with GLaDOS. She can't wait to rekindle the relationship. ◆